[This transcript was created by LAI staff. It is as true a representation of the original as we could create. When a word was too difficult to decipher or was questionable we put those words in brackets. All text in brackets represents the voice of the transcriber rather than the voice of the letter writer. We have not maintained the spacing that exists in the original letters because that was not compliant with our accessibility standards. We are left justifying most lines.]

[citation information]
Collection title: Corcoran Gallery of Art and Corcoran College of Art + Design, Corcoran Gallery of Art directors' records
collection number: COR-0002-0-RG
Series 1: MacLeod, Barbarin and McGuire records
Subseries 1: Indexed correspondence
Box 2008-001
Folder 23: Letters 221-230

[Letter 221]

Roelker, Alred
New York Feb 3. 1874
Recd Feb 4. 1874,

The owner of the Paintings mentioned in last letter is Mr Louis [Durr ?].
Has sent a Catalogue.

[Page 1]
Louis Windmuller & Roelker,
Commission Merchants,
New York.
February 3d, 1874.

Wm McaLeod, Esq.
Curator Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington D.C.

Dear Sir
In reply to your favor of yesterday I beg to say that the owner of the paintings in questions is Mr. Louis [Durr ?] of this city. As to the size of the pictures, there is a number of large ones but by far the greater number are cabinet pieces. An idea of what the collection contains, may be gathered from a catalogue which was published last winter when an exhibition of it for a benevolent purpose took place + which I send to you. The names

[Page 2]
of the painters mentioned in the catalogue are authenticated in many cases by both the signatures or monograms, as well as by the distinct character of the artists. Sometimes the distinct character of design color [handling ?] sufficiently authenticates the work. Some may be

in a few cases the [names ?] of such artists, which best illustrated the characters of the works were taken in order to assign them their place in the period to which they belong.
The collection has been formed mostly from such old collections in Europe as well as this country, which bore in themselves, proofs of genuine-ness.

[Last page]
Louis Windmuller & Roelker,
Commission Merchants,
New York

It was naturally the work of many years with the owner, who is a gentleman of means & without family. ---
I beg to add that [W. ?] [Durr ?] does not particularly desire that your Institution should take charge of his whole collection, if this should not be found conveniently but he desires to have those pictures which he values most in a safe place during his proposed absence.
I may add that the idea of offering the collection to you, suggested itself to the [writer ?], who is a lover of art in consequence of a recent visit to your city, where he visited your collection.

Very respectfully
Alfred Roelker

[Letter 221 ½]

Pringle Jane Mrs.
Georgetown S.C,
Nov 16. 1873,

Offers a portrait of Chief Justice Shippin by Stewart. For sale.

Corcoran Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C.
[Appears upside down] Return, if not called for in 5 days.

[Page 1]
Georgetown
South Carolina
Nov: 16.
White House
[20 Nov written over top.
[Personal monogram of an intertwined “J” and “P”]

Dear Mr. Corcoran
Having heard that you intend founding a National Gallery in Washn [Washington] I ventures to write in the hope that I may induces you to become the purchaser of a very valuable portrait by the celebrated Stewart of Chief Justice Shipen of Pa. my greatgrandfather.

[Page 2]
It has been reckoned one of Stewarts' very best paintings and is in all respects in perfect preservation_the wonderful flesh tints being as well preserved and as fresh as if painted yesterday. I should like it to belong to a public institution safe from all the risks and chances of private ownership in the South. Shippen was the last Chief Justice under the crown and Father of the beautiful & unhappy Mrs. Arnold [Peggy Shippen Arnold] who was my grandmother's sister as I

[Page 3]
dare say you know from [Banor of ?] history of that period.
I am quite at a loss to fix a price upon this portrait. The Rutledges sold one by Stewart of Genr [General] Washington for $1200 but it was a full length: as a painting it did not compare with the one I have; which however is a Kitkat as I think they used to call the ¾ sitting length.
Should you take the matter into consideration perhaps you would be so good as to furnish me with

[Last page]
some starting found of comparison or analogy as to the nature of such a work. I believe Stewarts [Gilbert Stuart] are quite rare now. My sister has a beautiful one of my Grandmother Mrs. Lea but then like most of Stewarts only the face is fully finished the draperies are merely designated as was often the case with his portraits of women.
I trust your health continues good and your eye I hope no longer troubles you. With my love to Miss Eustis believe me dear Mr Corcoran

Faithfully yours
Jane Pringle

[Transcriber's note: Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Edward Shippen IV is now in the collection of the National Gallery of Art. The Corcoran Gallery of Art purchased it from Mrs. John Julius Izard Pringle (the letter writer, Jane Pringle) in 1874. Shippen was the Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Margaret "Peggy" Shippen Arnold was married to General Benedict Arnold.]

[Letter 222]

Pringle. Jane,
[in pencil: Georgetown S.C.] Feb. 1. 1874

Feb 5. 1874 [in pencil: Rec.d Feb 5]

[in pencil: arrival of picture acknowledged]

Has sent picture of Chief Justice by Stewart address to the Gallery

[Page 1]
Georgetown

South Carolina
1st Feb: 1874

Wm Corcoran
Dear Sir
In compliance with your request to send to Washington my picture of Chief Justice Shippen by Stewart [Gilbert Stuart], and trusting that the Committee may find my report of it in all respects accurate, I have had it carefully packed and my son will carry it to Charleston tomorrow by steamer and deliver it himself to the Express addressed to “The Corcoran Gallery of Art”
“Washington”
“D.C.”
I hope the affair may terminate to our mutual satisfaction and am

Faithfully yours
Jane Pringle
P.S. Please have the receipt of picture acknowledged.

[Letter 223]

McLellan. G.F.
Feb. 5. 1874.
Feb 6/74.

Acknowledges receipt of Ticket.

[Page 1]
Washington DC Feby 5. 74
Dear Sir,
I gratefully acknowledge the receipt of the invitation to attend the opening of the Corcoran Art Gallery, and the ticket of admission.
Very respectfully, yours,
G.F. McLellan

A. Hyde. Esq.
Secretary.

[Letter 224]

Stierlin Carl.
Feb. 5. 1874,
Feb 6/74

Offers his services to repair plaster casts. [Written in pencil: Recd Feb. 5]

[Page 1]

Office. Treasurer of the United States.
Loan Division
Washington. Febr. 5. 1874

Sir
Having read in the paper that a lot of plaster casts for your art_gallery has arrived in a damaged condition I would respectfully offer my services to you as a competent artist to repair these plaster casts without injury. If this work be intrusted to incompetent hands, the artistic value of the whole cast migth be spoiled I would state that I am sculptor, have frequented the royal academy of find arts at Berlin Prussia for 8 years, while one of the instructors was Professor Christian Ranch who made the bust of Humbold for your gallery I am pupil of Gustav Blaeser, at present Professor on the academy of fine arts at Berline Prussia; as reference about my standing as an artist I would mention J.L. [Smithmeyer ?] Esq. superintendent of the "Potomac Terra Cotta works" D.C. for whom I have

[Last Page]
modelled for the last six months.
I am willing to repair one of the dammaged plaster casts and submit it to the judgement of <u>any competent artist you may select.</u>
I am Sir very respectfully
Carl Stierlin

W.W. Corcoran Esq
Washington D.C.

[Letter 225]

Feby 9th 1874.
W.W. Corcoran Esq.
Respected Sir,
I must beg that you will pardon the liberty I take in thus intruding for a few moments on your valuable time. Having seen by the papers that you are collection valuable paintings for your magnificent "Gallery of Art" the thought occurred to me that perhaps you would purchase from us some very valuable paintings, [& ?] two small pieces of statuary, which were bequeathed to the Smithsonian by "James H. Behan." The paintings been bought regardless of price by Mr. Behan during his visit to Europe in the year 1850. We are reluctantly compelled to disperse of them to raise funds to enlarge our Hospital.
I have the honor to remain with sentiment of the highest esteem.

Most respectfully
Sister Isadore
Sister Supreme
St. Vincent's Hospital
Norfolk, V.a.

Schedule of Paintings

1. Judith after the murder of Holofernes 28 in by 40
Said to be an original by Allain Christofer 1621.
2. Seen in a Flemish Inn (Rubens) 17 in by 22
Over

[Page 2]
3. Time [exquisiti ?] / (want of drapery) said to be the work of Carlo Dolci small
4. A very charming copy of Guido's Beatrice Cinei 28 inches by 40
5. Also Guido "Hope" very fine.
6. The Sibyl holding an open parchment fortelling the birth of the Virgin very fine said to be an original

We have also two small pieces of exquisite statuary

[Back of Letter 225]
Isadore. Sister Superior.
St. Vincents' Hospital.
Norfolk Va.
Feb 9. 1874,
Feb. 10. 1874.

Offers six Pictures for sale.

[Letter 226]

Colburn Mrs R.
Feb 9. 1874,

Feb 9. 1874,

Requests permission to be allowed to place two pictures on exhibition.

Permission given March 10/74
And copy of Requisitions sent.

[Page 1]

Washington D.C.
No. 1533 Fourteenth St.
February 9th 1874
Sir:
Having been informed that the trustees of the "Corcoran Gallery of Art" propose allowing Artists the privilege of exhibiting their pictures in the side rooms of said gallery so soon as suitable arrangements can be made. I would, therefore, respectfully request permission to be allowed to place on exhibition two of my own paintings, one being a fancy piece, but, at the same tie,

consisting of portraits of my two children, on canvas 25X30 inches, the other a fruit piece, on canvas 29X34 inches.
Hoping to have a favorable con--

[Page 2]

--sideration of my application, and to be promptly informed of the ultimate decision of the committee,
I am
Very respectfully, +.e.
Mrs R. Colburn
Artist.

Wm. McLeod. Esq.
Curator of the
Corcoran Gallery of Aart.

[Letter 227]

Avery, S.P.
New York, Geb. 10. 1874
Recvd Feb 11/74.

In reply to a letter with regard to a collection of paintings offered to the Gallery.
Considers them worthless.
Encloses letter upon the subject from Clarence Cook.

[In pencil: Rec'd + assured? Feb. 13/74]

[Page 1]
S.P. Avery Art Rooms
88 Fifth Avee. near 14th.
[Letterhead includes portrait of a person dressed in Roman clothing]
New York Feby 10th [or 12th?] 1874

Mr. Wm. MacLeod.

Dear Sir:
I have your [fan?] of the [illegible word] and apologize for not answering it before. I hesitated to do so for the matter is rather a delicate one, and I had not carefully examined the collection, but having seen them from time to time as the were picked up at the [associates ?] I was so indifferent to them that I really was not competent to [gain ?] and impartial opinion, therefore I have tried to get such information as would possibly be of service to you. The enclosed note will I think cover the ground (but as

[Page 2]
it was written to assist me in giving a judgement I may not be entirely justified in sending it) Mc C. is one of our most itelligent critics and does not write upon a subject which he is not entirely competent to give an opinion, and in this matter I am sure that he is right from all I know and have heard on the subject.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art of which I am a trustee__has important to receive the same collection, [illegible word due to a rip and crease in the paper] declined, alleging [most ?] of room _ and then had to decline any of them because we did not want them. Institutions kindred to ours are constantly annoyed with application from person who for purpose of selling or for vanity desire to loan works of art_from experience we find thats in 99 cases out of 100 the things offered are worthless, and we have to be constantly in the watch to prevent inferior things from getting an endorsement which an exhibition

[Back page]
In an established gallery of art is supposed to give.
Very truly yours
[Sam. P. Avery ?]

[Additional letter enclosed with Letter 227]

[Front page]

My dear Mr. Avery,
I did see the collection of pictures you refer to_visiting it several times, and going over it very carefully. A more worthless collection I never saw, any where; there was not a picture in it that I would have accepted as a gift: I could not have hung it up in my house, and, certainly, I never could have sold it.
I believe this was the opinion of every disinterested person who, like myself, went carefully over the collection. As for their authenticity_though I gave us credit to the assertions of the people who were concerned in the enterprise. I profess to know nothing: I judge the pictures by their [illegible word] worthlessness and by their inferiority to good

[Page 2]
specimen of the painters where mane they sporter. The exhibition was to my [illegible word] a melancholy, a disheartening, comment on the expense of the general community in which it took place for such a collection would not have been tolerate in London or Paris. I do not [want ?] on a proof of the [expense ?], the comment of the newspaper from an even when they [praises ?] the collection our [illegible word] it as a genuine duties. Fa, the newspapers are always very tender to a clarity show, and will say almost anything & keep it. I did not write a word about it. The artist you [?] was that mine. My charity will not have covered such a multitude of sins ! I was sorry that the audits was what it was, but its value may be tested by the fact that

[Back page]
it treated some pictures which were made copies, by some home-painters apprentice, 9 prints by Durer as if they were picture the masters hand where [illegible word] they bore.

It should be in my humble opinion a not misfortune + have [this ?] pictures accepted for exhibition by any Institution of authority. The Corcoran Art gallery would make a very poor beginning by adopting such an
[mis- ?] position; and when the cause of charity did

not call for silence as to its real character, it could be the duty of every instruction person to explore its independent [believes cares ?] and it [illegible word] be a duty very easily performed.

Yours very [illegible word]
Clarence Cook

Feb. 11, '74

[Letter 228]

Hubbard. J. P.
Feb. 12. 1874,
Feb. 13. 1874

Acknowledges receipt of Tickets.

[Page 1]

Church of the Strangers,
[Washington crossed out], D.C. Georgetown
Feby 12th 1875.

Mr A. Hyde, Dicr.
I have to thank you for your polite invitation to myself + family to be present at the opening of the Corcoran Gallery of Art + also your ticket of admission to myself personally.
Owing to it's being wrongly directed, it did not reach me in time for us to avail ourselves of it.
Following upon this delay in my receiving it, my absence in New York for ten days, has prevented an earlier acknowledgement of your kindness.

Very respecty yos
John P. Hubbard.
To the Trustees of
The Corcoran Gallery of
Art.

[Letter 229]

Thayer. Sanford
Syracuse Feb 13/74
Answered Feb 20. 1874

Proposes to ship a portrait of C.L. Ellicott to the Gallery at his own expense.
Asks if it shall be shipped.

[Page 1]
Syracuse, Feb. 13. 1874.
W.W. Corcoran;

Dir Sir, [illegible word] will pardon this boldness, or "yankee imprudence" in me when I tell you why I thus interrupt you.
I have read some little ac't of you disposition of your art treasures, and since I have in half length portrait, life size, of my lamented tutor C.L. Elliott, I propose, with your concent, to ship the same to your address, at my own expense of course, for your inspiration, in the hope that you may ful disprove to purchase and place it in good and appropriate company where it can have a prominent resting place. For several years part I have been greatly disabled by inflamatory rheumatism, and I find myself under the torture of [illegible] embarrasment, and in some of my dispairing moments I have wondered whether this effort with you might not have the welcome results of raising the will of dispondency that I might see a few more years of usefulness.
Shall I bother you by sending the picture? Your prompt refusal will break no bones, nor bonds of friendship. A drowning man's struggles will soon end whether he catches any straws or not.

Very respectfully yours +e.
Sanford Thayer.

P.S. Pardon me if I say that the widow Elliott together with his many friends have pronounced this portrait the best ever painted of the eminent artist.

[Letter 230]

Treasury, Secty of.
Feb 14. 1874
Feb 14. 1874,

Collectors at New York and Georgetown have recvd instructions to admit one case containing Majolica Vase. fee of duty.

[Page 1]

[Transcriber's note: This is a form letter that has been filled out with the relevant information for the Corcoran Gallery]

Treasury Department,
February 14th, 1874.

'Sir.'
I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 14th instant, to the Secretary, requesting the admission free of duties and charges, of one case containing a majolica vase, as per bill of landing herewith returned, ____

Imported for the use of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. in the steamship "Algeria,"___
At the port of New York,___
From Liverpool.
The Collector of Customs at that port has been instructed accordingly, and to forward said case to Georgetown, D.C. without examination; the Collector at which latter port has also been instructed to allow the examination thereof to be made at the said Gallery, as further requested by you.

I am, very respectfully,
[J.V Hartley ?]
Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

Wm. MacLeod, Esq.
Curator, Corcoran Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C.